

Title - Career Planning for Hospitality & Tourism

Keywords - Employability, Professional Development Planning

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School / Dept - Department of Hospitality, Leisure & Tourism Management

Institution - Oxford Brookes University

Activity - Developing students' career planning skills

Group - Level 3 hospitality and tourism undergraduates

Aim - To embed career planning skills within undergraduate hospitality and tourism courses at the University.

Context / Background - In an increasingly competitive employment market it is vital that students and graduates develop skills to manage their own career and make provision for lifelong learning. Higher education has been criticised in the past for not preparing students to effectively manage the transition from education to work, and graduating students themselves have commented that they would like more careers advice. For full results of the student course experience survey [click here](#).

This module is designed for final year hospitality and tourism students and aims to support the development of skills and understanding required for successful employment. The module is compulsory for honours students studying on four-year sandwich programmes.

Example - Learning is facilitated through a combination of lectures and interactive workshops that run throughout the final year of the student's course. The module includes a simulated graduate assessment centre and the majority of lectures are delivered by external employment specialists. To successfully complete the module students are required to:

- Critically evaluate the literature on graduate employability and apply this to an investigation of employer requirements for graduate skills and competencies
- Analyse the organisational culture, business strategy and human-resource management practices of hospitality and/or tourism organisations in order to assess career opportunities.
- Effectively employ the self-development approach to select and plan for a future career

The module is assessed via a 3,000 word personal development portfolio which includes; an analytical report on the graduate labour market and competences sought by a chosen employer, a CV and personal statement, and a personal career plan supported by a reflective commentary.

Other comments - Although in its first year, the module has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students. They commented principally on the following aspects:

- The simulated graduate assessment centre was particularly well received by students (this was made possible by external sponsorship from industry and by funding from the Savoy Education Trust).
- The completion of an online, externally validated psychometric test (with structured feedback) was a useful starting point for students to identify their work values and internal motivations.
- Using external employment experts gave the module credibility in the eyes of the students as it ensured that the knowledge imparted was both current and relevant to them.
- Beginning the module at the start of the final year of study allows students more time to engage in self analysis, to research the labour market and to develop their employability skills.
- The opportunity to host at a number of employer presentations and events organised by the Departmental Careers Office was cited as an important part of student learning - [see Case Study 100](#).

The module has been more successful in its first run than perhaps any of the tutors had originally anticipated. Feedback from both students and from careers tutors within the department has been excellent and there is clear evidence that students are feeling more confident about their skills for employment and in their abilities to articulate these to prospective employers. In addition to developing students' potential for employment, the module also meets the University's requirements for Personal Development Planning (PDP) and presents an effective means of embedding this in curricula.

A range of online, interactive employability materials is currently under development for use in 2005/6 and future runs of the module will experiment with different modes of assessment, such as audio/visual portfolios.

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